

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A replaceable module for a printing apparatus with programmable software controls, the module comprising:
  - an internal memory for holding stored instructions;
  - a peripheral memory holding a software upgrade for the printing apparatus programmable software controls;
  - a communications interface for exchanging information with the printing apparatus; and,
  - a microprocessor connected to the internal memory, the peripheral memory and the communications interface, the microprocessor performing the stored instructions to install the software upgrade into the printing apparatus via the communications interface.
2. The replaceable module of claim 1, wherein the communications interface comprises a wired communication element.
3. The replaceable module of claim 1, wherein the communications interface comprises a wireless communication element.
4. The replaceable module of claim 1, further comprising a peripheral memory interface, where the microprocessor is connected to the peripheral memory through the peripheral memory interface.

5. The replaceable module of claim 4, where the peripheral memory comprises flash memory.

6. The replaceable module of claim 5, where the peripheral memory comprises flashcards.

7. The replaceable module of claim 4, where the peripheral memory comprises nonvolatile integrated circuit chip memory.

8. The replaceable module of claim 4, where the peripheral memory comprises bubble memory.

9. In a printing apparatus, a method of operating a replaceable module, the method comprising:

allowing a processor element on board the replaceable module to interrogate the printing apparatus;

determining which software components in the printing apparatus need to be upgraded;

accessing memory for any necessary software code components for an upgrade; and,

installing the software code into the printing apparatus.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the processor element is a microprocessor.

11. The method of claim 9 wherein the memory that is accessed is internal.

12. The method of claim 9 wherein the memory that is accessed is external.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein the memory is accessed via a network connection.

14. The method of claim 12 wherein the memory is comprised of flashcards.

15. The method of claim 13 wherein the network connection access is accomplished by a wireless communication element.

16. In a printing apparatus, a method of operating a replaceable module having a processor element, the method comprising:

placing the printing apparatus into diagnostic mode;

allowing a processor element on board the replaceable module to interrogate the printing apparatus;

determining from the interrogation which software components in the printing apparatus need to be upgraded;

scheduling as determined by the processor element when a software upgrade should occur;

accessing memory as directed by the processor element for necessary software code components for an upgrade; and,

installing the software code into the printing apparatus.

17. The method of claim 16 wherein the processor element is a microprocessor.

18. The method of claim 16 wherein the memory that is accessed is internal.

19. The method of claim 16 wherein the memory that is accessed is external.

20. The method of claim 19 wherein the memory is accessed via a network connection.

21. The method of claim 19 wherein the memory is comprised of flashcards.

22. The method of claim 20 wherein the network connection access is accomplished by a wireless communication element.

23. The method of claim 16 wherein the interrogation further comprises gathering machine and software version indicia, model number, serial number, and other identifying information, as would be desirable for completing an inventory of machines in the field.

24. The method of claim 23 wherein the identifying information is passed via the network connection.

25. The method of claim 23 wherein the identifying information is stored in memory on the replaceable module.